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what took place, informants were anxious to point this out. They also admitted that its successful carrying out depended on several factors which no longer operated. The former Ngoni households with a number of servants and nursemaids were only to be found in the families of the Paramount and subordinate chiefs. The rigid separation of the girl from her own family at marriage was no longer usual in the central kingdom where Ngoni marriages often took place in the same village, and where daughters of important men stayed in their fathers' villages at marriage instead of leaving.

In Ngoni households family sleeping and eating arrangements depended not upon the small individual family but on the extended family group and on the boys' dormitory (*lawesi*). As a general rule small children slept with their mother in her hut, but when her husband was sleeping with her it was considered wrong to have any but very young children in the hut. Boys up to the age of seven, when they went to the *lawesi*, and girls up to their marriage, usually slept in the hut of a mother or a widowed sister of their father.

Each wife, after she had been 'shown the hearth-stones', had a granary built for her by her husband or her husband's brothers where she stored grain. On the rafters in her hut, and in pots and jars on the enclosed verandah, and in pits dug under the eaves, she stored other foodstuffs, such as chillies, beans and sweet potatoes. From these supplies, supplemented by fresh 'relish' from the gardens or bush, she cooked daily meals which she served to her husband, and which her younger sons in the *lawesi* fetched to eat there, while she ate with her young children. Her husband's meals and the older boys' meals were taken in company with the male members of his kinship group and other villagers at the men's meeting-place by the gate of the kraal. His wife sent his food by a child in a covered basket with the small pot of relish on top. The publicity of the men's eating habits made them critical among their fellows of their wives' cooking, and this was a strong incentive among Ngoni wives to maintain a high standard of cooking. In addition to sending food to her husband, an Ngoni wife was expected to send a basket of food now and then to her father-in-law, or to any of her brothers-in-law who had assisted her to mend a roof or build a granary.

Within a wife's hut, not only food but other possessions, both personal and household, were stored. Clothes for daily and ceremonial use; mats for sleeping on and for drying grain; pots for water, cooking, and beer-brewing; ornamental jars for storing beans; baskets for carrying grain; food baskets embroidered with beads—the Ngoni wife of good family expected to possess all these and to keep them carefully. Many of them she brought with her on her marriage or had given her later as presents by her own parents and family, in order that she might not appear poor or of low rank among her husband's people. For the same reason, she

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was instructed before marriage how to keep these household possessions in good repair, and how to smear the floor and walls of the hut with cowdung so that they presented the shining surface typical of Ngoni buildings.

The tables which follow show the total population of three villages in each kingdom at the time they were visited in 1938 and 1939, including such data as the number of widows, of plural marriages, of wives for whom *lobola* was given, and the number of men away at work.

	1 Males	2 Males	3 Women	4 Children	5 Total	6 Away	7 Widows	8 Plural marriages	9 Lobola marriages
Northern kingdom									
Kawasini	83	10	81	98	359	19	4	6	81
Endindeni	13	9	21	81	31	4	1	6	13
Ekhamgeni	37	19	36	54	109	11	4	5	30
Central kingdom									
Cinkwita	39	22	39	34	113	13	3	4	9
Mangoso	60	41	63	78	184	9	18	9	4
Mzukhatha	188	71	113	68	251	30	16	14	18

Earlier in this chapter reference was made to the patterns of residential grouping on a kinship basis, which had evolved from the mixed tribal groups in the very large villages of pre-European days. The choice of these six villages as examples was made mainly on the grounds that they had a considerable proportion of members of Swazi or trans-Zambesi clans and therefore illustrated the traditional Ngoni pattern of kinship grouping. The northern kingdom villages showed the *hungwale* and *pago* pattern still extant. It had disappeared in the central kingdom villages with the result that the villages were much larger, and included groups based on house affiliation which would have been divided into separate villages in the north. On the other hand the sub-division of a village in the central kingdom into *banja* was not found in the north.

The data concerning these villages have been analysed to illustrate the households associated with the chief man in the leading clan in the village. These households were those of his wives, his mothers, his brothers, his sons, sisters and daughters. In the north this man was in one case a *nduna nsuna*, in another a son of a great war *induna*, and in the third the head of a collateral branch of the royal clan. In the central kingdom the chief man in one was a *nduna nsuna*, in another a grandson of a great war *induna*, and in the third the head of the clan of the royal shadow. The proportion of households belonging to the leading clan was much higher in the smaller villages of the north than in the rest, since they were approximating to a one-family village.

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sieves for straining beer or water poured through ashes to make salt. These lay around all day if they were being used, and were periodically scrubbed and put on the rack to dry, and at night stacked tidily in the veranda. In the day-time sleeping-mats of finely woven fibre were brought out into the sun, and so were skins and cloths used as coverings at night. Some of the Ngoni used curved wooden headrests as pillows often carved at the ends with animals' heads to fascinate a small child.

On the polished space in front of the hut were laid from time to time mats on which sprouting millet for making beer was dried, or partly pounded damp maize. A young child was sometimes told to keep the fowls and dogs off these mats. These animals and often small kids, wandered and pecked and scratched and quarrelled inside the fence all day, and young children chased them.

Beyond the fence lay other fenced compounds grouped round the cattle kraal, and beyond the village buildings lay patches of woodland, grass pastures, cultivated 'gardens', and water-holes and streams. Going with the mother or grandmother or a nurse girl or helper to fetch water, or work in the gardens was an expedition for young children which they delighted in.

In these village surroundings there were some places forbidden to young children, who were corrected by everyone with smacks and stern reproofs until they learned to keep away. One such forbidden place was the kraal gateway where the men sat and talked and ate. No woman until she had passed the menopause was allowed to cross over in front of the gateway lest she injure the cattle. If therefore children strayed down there, younger women did not like to go and fetch them back, as the men always grumbled if women went there lest they should harm the cattle. It was nevertheless a place that had a great attraction for boys of five to seven years old, because they found their fathers there and the herd boys. The boys in this age-group of five to seven showed

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Women's skills: Guardianship of property

Ngoni social organization, as we saw in Chapter I, placed the guardianship of all wealth except cattle in the hands of the women who were heads of houses. As a Ngoni girl grew towards adulthood and the time drew nearer when she would marry and leave her home for a strange village, the leading women of her father's house initiated her into the skills needed to create and preserve the forms of property for which she would some day be responsible.

First among these skills came the care of the hut and compound. The framework and roof of the huts were built by men, but the walls were mudded and the floors of the hut and veranda were strengthened and polished by women. Ngoni women of good family did not often do the actual plastering of mud upon the wooden framework of the hut. It was considered too dirty and exhausting a job for them to do, but they had to know how it should be done, and what standards of good work involved, in order that they might later instruct others. During a hut building Ngoni girls might be seen tucking up their clothes and rather half-heartedly slapping mud on the walls, to the good-humoured jesting of the village women who were vigorous and expert at the job. The girl's grandmother stood by and said at intervals: 'That is too thick; it will fall off. Fill up those cracks. Smooth over those joins,' and so on. The girls shrugged their shoulders and obeyed while Grandmother was watching, but gave up as soon as she went away.

The flat-ended flails with which the floor was beaten were heavy and girls were generally unable to use them expertly, but they were made to watch the process, with its seemingly endless beating of the earth floor compounded of river mud, ant-hill clay and cowdung. Once the floor was beaten so that it was level and all cracks had disappeared, the Ngoni girls were made to get down on their knees and learn how to polish it with damp ashes and a smear of cowdung, rubbed

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356 in with a smooth round stone. This too was hard work, but every now and then the grandmother, watching and supervising, handed out a lump of clarified fat which quickly brought up a fine polish. The girls were told that this high polish was necessary so that people might sit with pleasure on the floor, and so that all dust and refuse showed up clearly in the morning sweeping of the hut. The floor of the veranda was similarly polished, and, as we saw in Chapter [351] IV, the more important huts had a smeared and polished space all round the front.

353 In arranging the inside of the hut girls were taught the right places to put the water-jars and other pots, the baskets and mats, and the bundles of cloth and ornaments belonging to the 'house' wrapped in mats or packed neatly in wooden or tin chests. Brass and bead ornaments, and special cloths [301] for use by men and women on ceremonial occasions, were [292] all kept in the huts of leading women. The ornaments worn [768] by such a woman during her lifetime were returned to the 'house' after her death and looked after in the hut of her successor. These possessions and heirlooms were periodically 356 brought out into the sun, and shaken and aired or polished. A housewife was publicly shamed if she did not take care of such property, and people spread stories that she was careless about keeping the wealth of the house in good repair. Girls were reminded of this when they were called to help at such a 'spring cleaning', and told as a warning: 'So-and-so in that village over there, she let the insects eat the cloth of the house. The mildew spoiled the bead-bands and waistcoats. The green rust came on the brass wire. She was shamed when men spoke about it.'

251 Part of the property of each household was the food stored after harvest or gathered from the bush. Formerly the Ngoni stored their staple cereal in pits dug in the kraal, mudded and fired and covered with a flat rock. The same kind of pit was sometimes made in the side veranda for storing sweet potatoes, but nothing was stored in the kraal.

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302 washing they applied the fat to their hair and combed it out, de-kinking it now and then with strips of bamboo bound tightly to the head. They scented their hair with the juice of sweet-smelling leaves, and dressed it formerly in the high chignon. As they gave that up, they took to wearing headcloths of different-coloured cloth so arranged that [301] beadbands across the forehead could be worn. Ngoni girls needed no urging to take this beauty treatment very seriously, and before a big *ngoma* dance, gave it much time and thought.

554 Only the big wives and elder sisters of chiefs could wear
301 the necklace and headpiece of leopard or lion claws. They were the distinguishing mark of an Ngoni 'princess' or 'queen'.

The art of cleanliness

181 I have called this section an 'art' because the Ngoni took
• 356 an aesthetic pleasure in achieving and maintaining certain
515 standards in their homes and in their persons, which were held up to young adults as being highly desirable. This
182 emphasis on a particular kind of cleanliness, while putting up with much that was not clean in their surroundings, was only one of several inconsistencies in Ngoni culture. The appreciation of a desire for this kind of cleanliness had not [751] necessarily any connexion with hygienic cleanliness. It was more closely associated with the Ngoni love of orderliness and scrupulous attention to detail in the appearance of persons and places. It was also connected with what they regarded as comfort and good living. The effect of mission teaching about health and sanitation, and of government [177] courses held for chiefs to instruct them in modern welfare measures, often caused confusion among Ngoni elders. Sometimes their traditional standards of cleanliness coincided with modern hygienic standards, and sometimes they did not. In any case it was seldom that Europeans recognized that the Ngoni had any standards to begin with, and they

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generally assumed that everything was 'dirty' which was not hygienically clean. The Ngoni resented this, all the more because of their cultural insistence on decency and order, and on certain forms of external cleanliness.

Their huts, furniture and mats were often infested with ticks and bugs—neither of which the Ngoni liked, regarding them as rather disgusting. The old remedy was to leave the tick-infested site and burn the objects full of bugs. As villages became more stationary and property accumulated in the huts, and became more valuable and expensive, they built strangers' huts for visitors who might otherwise infect their own. Bugs were dealt with by bringing all bedding, mats and bedsteads out into the sun and pouring boiling water on them again and again.

Similarly it was an aesthetic disgust rather than hygiene which made them insist that there should be no spitting or nose-blowing on the floors of huts or verandas. Such actions had to take place outside, and vehement comments were made when a visitor forgot his manners in this way. An ingenious tiny iron spoon with a long handle was used by the older Ngoni for cleaning the ears and nose.

Perhaps nothing showed the Ngoni pleasure in and desire for cleanliness so clearly as the quick and apt excuses made when standards were obviously in temporary abeyance. There was no doubt that young men and girls liked looking clean and well-groomed. The daily wash in the river with soapy leaves, followed by rubbing on fat or oil made the skin glisten. We have talked already about the use of twigs as tooth-brushes, the rinsing of the mouth before and after meals, and the use of astringent fruit to make the mouth feel clean.

The same scrupulous attitude about cleanliness was seen in the washing of dishes, spoons and cooking-pots after each meal. It was almost as if the standard of housewifery was proclaimed by the sight of food baskets, gourds, spoons, etc., spread on the platform outside the hut to dry. Washing up

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

593 brew beer when her husband asks her. In addition to this minimal amount of required co-operation, in many instances husband and wife have a great deal in common. They may go to church or visit a relative, or even go together to a beer party.

The obligation on a man to clothe his wife is the most clear-cut and obvious duty in marriage. It is the failure to clothe that is [586] usually cited as evidence of desertion when a woman seeks a divorce. There is no specific standard to which he must clothe her, but she usually insists that she is not to be more poorly clad than are her 291 neighbours. Clothes consisted in the old days of skins and barkcloth, [177] but cloth was introduced by Arabs before the Europeans arrived, and was used as a form of currency by the early European settlers. A few people still wear skins, but only on top of Western clothing. [286] There is no indigenous weaving, and all clothes have therefore to be bought in the shops.

342 The man takes the initiative in finding a hut in which he and his 356 wife live, and it is he who undertakes the major work of repair. 462 Houses, if made of bamboo, last for about twenty years, but require rethatching, while pole and mud huts last about eight years only. When a couple begin to live together they usually borrow an empty hut in the village, asking the man or woman who is looking after the hut if they can move in. No charge can be made for the loan of a [591] hut. If the marriage begins uxorilocally, and the woman has previously been living in a dormitory, she may ask the other girls in the dormitory to go and sleep elsewhere until her husband can build her a hut of her own. The man does the work of marking out the site, digging the foundations, cutting the trees for the framework, and so on. All these are men's jobs, and he may be assisted in the work by his male neighbours and relatives. His wife gathers thatching grass, but the men do the actual thatching. The finishing of the house is entirely the wife's work, and she usually gets her friends and relatives to help her plaster the walls and floor. The maintenance of the plaster remains her responsibility and she ought to renew the floor every month after she has menstruated.

593 Every wife ought to have her own garden, and, sooner or later, 423 her own storehouse. Most young people acquire gardens of their 24 own long before they marry, but continue to pool the produce of the [343] garden with the adult responsible for feeding them. This arrangement continues after marriage, and the incoming spouse at first merely assists in the garden of the other and is fed from the common storehouse of his or her parents or relatives. If a woman has been 591 living with her grandmother and her husband comes to live with her, 24 the couple draw on the wife's grandmother's storehouse for their food, 343 and place the produce of the wife's garden in it. Similarly, in virilocal marriage, a woman may at first help in her husband's garden and draw from his mother's storehouse. But after a year or two, if a man is not to be despised as a sluggard, he must build a storehouse in the village where they have settled, and see that there is